M. García-Arenal and G. Wiegers, *A Man of Three Worlds. Samuel Pallache, a Moroccan Jew in Catholic and Protestant Europe.* Translated by Martin Beagles, with a foreword by David Nirenberg and Richard Kagan. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 2003, xxiv + 173 pp. ISBN 0801872251.

In the cemetery of the Spanish and Portuguese community of Amsterdam, in Ouderkerk, the monument of Samuel Pallache, who died in 1616 and was one of the first Jews to be buried in that cemetery, stands to this day. The Hebrew inscription on the monument bestows upon him the title of "Hakham," a title used for those who served as rabbis in Sephardic Jewish communities. Indeed, the Hebrew abbreviation on the monument, "KMHR"R" (meaning, "His Honor, our Teacher, Rabbi") creates the impression that this is the grave of a rabbinical figure. In the historical memory of this community, Samuel Pallache is engraved as one of the rabbinical figures who played an important role in the Jewish socialization of the Iberian *conversos* who returned to Judaism in Amsterdam and established there, in the early seventeenth century, one of the most impressive Jewish communities of that time. Pallache was connected to the Neve Shalom congregation, the second Sephardic congregation in Amsterdam, which was established there in 1608. According to the old chronicles of the Sephardic Jews in that city, in which historical reality and legend are intermingled, Pallache's residence in Amsterdam served as the place of prayer for that congregation. It is quite likely that Pallache was connected to it in its embryonic stage, as indicated by the fact that after his death, the members of Neveh Shalom purchased the Torah scrolls that had belonged to him and his family. However, as we learn from the fascinating study of García-Arenal and Wiegers, and from the juicy historical facts that they discovered in dozens of documents, which are dispersed among archives and libraries in Spain, Portugal, Holland, and Belgium, the historical figure of Pallache was far more complex than the romantic image in which legend has cloaked him, and far less harmonious than he appeared until now in the research carried out on him. Pallache was active in parallel fashion in various settings, and he was a man of multiple identities, loyalties, and allegiances. In that respect, he was no different from many of the members of the Sephardic community of "New Jews" in Amsterdam or from many of the crypto-Jews who were active in Iberia during the early modern period. Thanks to systematic and meticulous detective work and to careful examination of every one of the stations along the path of his activity, the authors of this captivating book have managed to grasp the great complexity and many contradictions of Samuel Pallache.

Previous scholarship merely brought to light the man's actions from 1608 on, in very partial fashion. That is to say, it covered the period from the time of his arrival in the Dutch Republic, when he began to pave his way

 

as the diplomatic and commercial agent of the Moroccan sultan Muley Zaidan. Through this activity, he gained the trust of Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange, and of the States General of the Dutch Republic, who wished to use him as an intermediary for expanding the Dutch presence in North Africa and strengthening ties with Morocco. These connections were regarded by the republican government as an important instrument in the confrontation with Spain, which had not diminished, despite the truce signed with her in 1609.

The present book, however, shows that the texture of Pallache's political and economic activities was far more tangled than the impression left by his overt official functions and activities. Although he belonged to a family of Sephardic Jews who took refuge in Morocco after the expulsion from Spain in 1492 (or, perhaps, precisely because of that), Pallache did not refrain, at various stages of his life, from seeking access to the Spanish crown and offering his services to King Philip III. During the struggles for power that struck the Sa'adian dynasty of Morocco in the first third of the seventeenth century, which undermined the stability of the state and gravely impaired the security of the Jewish community there, quite a few Jews left Morocco for Spain, and they were even willing to pay the price of conversion to Christianity for the right to settle there — and this was not always merely for the sake of convenience. Samuel Pallache arrived in Madrid in 1603 accompanied by his brother Joseph, and both of them expressed willingness to accept the sacrament of baptism along with their children. They offered their services to Philip III, presenting a plan to conquer the Moroccan port city of Larache for the Spanish crown. When this effort came to nothing, they made a similar proposal to the French crown. Only after these efforts failed, and the Spanish Inquisition began to make efforts to arrest them, did they move to Amsterdam. From their new place of residence, they placed their talents at the disposal of the Moroccan sultan and worked to strengthen his connections with the Dutch Republic.

However, Samuel Pallache continued to maintain secret connections with other states and rulers even while he was serving his master Mulay Zaidan. In his diplomatic activities between Morocco and the Dutch Republic, he frequently switched roles and supplied information about Morocco to the Dutch government, as if he were its agent. Moreover, at that stage, he did not relinquish his former ties with Spain. Near the end of his life, he even signed a secret agreement with the Spanish, according to which he obligated himself, among other things, to supply secret and sensitive information to them about the Dutch Republic and about connections between Morocco and France and England. He did so although just a year earlier, he had been put on trial in London following a suit filed against him by the Spanish, because he had captured two ships, one Portuguese and one Spanish, and stolen the merchandise that was on board in a privateering expedition, which he had made, under the flag of the sultan of Morocco.

Indeed, the man's constant reversals throughout the years of his diplomatic and commercial activity raise many questions: did he seek to serve the interests of Morocco or those of the Dutch Republic? Did he actually serve Spain, under the cover of his official status as an agent of the sultan? Or, perhaps, did he serve everyone's interests at the same time — which is to say no one's interests except his own and those of his family?

Despite his constant reversals and betrayals, he also maintained intimate personal relations with the sultan of Morocco, which were of deep importance to him, and after his death, his brother and other members of his family continued to maintain and develop these ties.

The authors of this book have succeeded in situating this colorful figure within the political culture of the age of mercantilism and of the baroque. They compare him with similar and parallel figures among the *moriscos*, and even among English and French agents and merchants, who adopted strategies similar to those of Pallache in order to advance their interests. This fascinating micro-historical study, which appears to focus on the history of a single central personality and on several members of his family, at the same time sheds light on a variety of broader historical subjects and issues: the massive presence of Jews from Morocco in Spain in the first half of the seventeenth century, who, despite their conversion to Christianity, played a central role in the dissemination of Judaism among the Portuguese *conversos* in Castile; the negative stereotypical image of the Jew in the early modern Western European discourse; the connections between Moroccan Jews, *conversos*, and *moriscos*, and the place of the latter in the fabric of relations between Spain and Morocco, especially after their expulsion from Spain in 1609, and more.

It is doubtful whether the authors are correct in referring to Samuel Pallache as a "clear predecessor of the European 'court Jews'," who played an important role in European politics from the second half of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century. Unlike most of the "court Jews," who exploited their closeness to the rulers of the states in order to increase their power and influence among the Jewish communities within which they were active, Pallache's involvement in the life of the Jewish community of Amsterdam was relatively limited. As the work of García-Arenal and Wiegers shows, Pallache distanced himself from the social life of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews, who regarded him as an alien presence because of his North African cultural origins. Similarly, it is doubtful whether one can agree with the authors' opinion, when they discover, as it were, a hint of the religious skepticism, which played such a central role in the creation of modern Western identity, in the behavior of Pallache and his family. Individualistic skepticism of this type was indeed to play an important role in the intellectual ferment of the Sephardic Jewish community of Amsterdam, but it was far from Pallache's world. Even if, at a certain stage, he was willing to deny his Jewish religion, that conduct was

more similar to patterns of behavior common among Jewish converts in Islamic countries from the Middle Ages on: they did not find it difficult to dissimulate their beliefs from time to time, and they adopted an inner faith that legitimized their actions. The words that Pallache wrote to Philip III in 1608, "as for affairs of the soul, God can be found everywhere," are closer to the latter mentality than to the ideas of Spinoza, contrary to the authors' conclusion.

The clear and fluent English translation makes the reading of this impressive book not only rewarding but also pleasurable. However, anyone who wishes to read some of the central documents that served the authors in this study should consult the appendix of the original Spanish version.[1]

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[1] M. García-Arenal y G. Wiegers, *Entre el Islam y Occidente. Vida de Samuel Pallache, Judío de Fez* (Madrid, 1999).

הפלע תמוהה שביות מצואים :
ועם רתנתי כמו״הרל פנואל :
וקרבי ארמות קברים לנום :
ועונע ישורה בקרבי כמו אל :
אבל פרי ציע וערש מנוחה :
לאיש צור קראי שמואל שביא :



ומצבה מושב מנוחת החכם :
הותיק הנשא מוב עם אלהים :
ועם אנשים כמ״הר שמואל פ״אג :
תמך אשר נתבקש בישיבה של
מעלה יום ו׳ לטבט משנת שע״
מני אגירה בבכי לפק ישי עבחז :